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INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEHC/DEPT OF AGRICULTURE WASHDC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TAIPEI 001457

SIPDIS

STATE PASS USTR FOR STRATFORD, ALTBACH AND O'CONNOR,
TREASURY FOR OASIA/WINSHIP AND JEWELL, NSC FOR LOI,
COMMERCE FOR 4431/ITA/MAC/AP/OPB/TAIWAN, STATE PASS USDA
FOR FAS/OSTA BLUM, MEAN, AND DAWSON; FAS/OCRA RADLER,
BURDETT, AND BEILLARD; FAS/OFSO SALLYARDS; APHIS/IS AND VS;
AND FSIS/HARRIES

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/10/2019

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SUBJECT: DIRECTOR URGES TAIPEI MAYOR TO END ANTI-U.S. BEEF
CAMPAIGN

REF: TAIPEI 1447

Classified By: AIT Director Bill Stanton for reasons 1.4 b/d

¶1. (C) Summary: AIT Director Stanton on December 10 urged Taipei Mayor Hau Long-bin to end the city's campaign against sales of U.S. beef offal and ground beef, which were permitted under a recently signed U.S.-Taiwan protocol. The Director reiterated that U.S. beef was safe to consume and that the campaign not only disseminated misleading information, but also violated the protocol. Mayor Hau did not dispute the safety of U.S. beef products, and acknowledged that beef had become a "fake" but effective political issue in Taiwan. The Mayor told the Director he "got the message," but made no promise to curtail or end the campaign. End summary.

A MISLEADING CAMPAIGN

¶2. (C) Soon after the November 2 implementation of the new protocol, Mayor Hau began promoting a campaign in Taipei whereby vendors who did not use U.S. ground beef, beef offal and spinal cords were certified and provided a logo to display in stores, hotels and restaurants that featured a wild-eyed U.S. flag-clad cow with a slash through it. Director Stanton on December 10 told Hau that the campaign, and the logo in particular, was grossly misleading because U.S. beef products imported under the protocol were safe. He noted that Americans viewed Taiwan as a friend and a strong partner, but were dismayed that some people on the island believed the United States would sell them unsafe products. He noted that an impasse over U.S. beef could affect other aspects of the U.S.-Taiwan relationship.

MAYOR: BEEF NOT A SAFETY BUT A POLITICAL ISSUE

¶3. (C) In response, Mayor Hau did not question the safety of U.S. beef products, and in fact noted that he had eaten U.S. beef at dinner the night before. He faulted, however, the U.S. and Taiwan governments for signing the protocol just one month before important local elections in Taiwan, saying the protocol gave the opposition Democratic Progressive Party an effective campaign issue against his own party, the ruling Kuomintang (KMT). In a lengthy explanation of the rationale

behind the city's campaign, he and two senior aides frequently contradicted one another and themselves. They also played down the campaign's negative intent and impact by describing it primarily as a beef-origin labeling scheme. Ultimately, in explaining why beef remained a political hot topic, Hau acknowledged it was a "fake issue ... but it works." At the end of the meeting, Hau said to the Director: "OK, I got the message," and promised to rethink the use of the campaign logo. He made no further commitments.

HAPPIER DISCUSSION ON NEW OFFICE COMPOUND

¶4. (C) The Director also updated Hau on the New Office Compound (NOC) project, noting rapid progress on permit requirements and underscoring the helpfulness of the mayor's staff. The Director restated AIT interest in negotiating a lease for land adjacent to the NOC site, but the Mayor said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would be responsible for negotiating a land swap needed to make the parcel available.

COMMENT: FOR MAYOR, IT'S ALL POLITICS

¶5. (C) Mayor Hau's campaign against the sale of U.S. beef offal and ground beef in Taipei is widely seen as a political ploy to boost what promises to be a tough reelection bid in late December 2010. Earlier in the day, KMT Legislative Yuan member Huang Chao-shun told PolOff that Hau's anti-beef

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campaign was politically smart, and had helped shift focus from areas where he was vulnerable, including persistent trouble with one of Taipei's light-rail lines. As a result, Hau's promise to consider moderating parts of his campaign was probably the best one could hope to come out of the meeting.

STANTON